
BILL REQUEST - CODE REVISER'S OFFICE

BILL REQ. #: Z-0166.2/07 2nd draft

ATTY/TYPIST: SCG:rmh

BRIEF DESCRIPTION: Establishing additional requirements for private
vocational schools.

AN ACT Relating to private vocational school programs; amending RCW 28C.10.020, 28C.10.050, and 28C.10.120; and making appropriations.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

Sec. 1. RCW 28C.10.020 and 1993 c 445 s 1 are each amended to read as follows:

Unless the context clearly requires otherwise, the definitions in this section apply throughout this chapter.

(1) "Agency" means the work force training and education coordinating board.

(2) "Agent" means a person owning an interest in, employed by, or representing for remuneration a private vocational school within or without this state, who enrolls or personally attempts to secure the enrollment in a private vocational school of a resident of this state, offers to award educational credentials for remuneration on behalf of a private vocational school, or holds himself or herself out to residents of this state as representing a private vocational school for any of these purposes.

(3) "Degree" means any designation, appellation, letters, or words including but not limited to "associate," "bachelor," "master,"

"doctor," or "fellow" which signify or purport to signify satisfactory completion of an academic program of study beyond the secondary school level.

(4) "Education" includes but is not limited to, any class, course, or program of training, instruction, or study.

(5) "Educational credentials" means degrees, diplomas, certificates, transcripts, reports, or documents, (~~((or letters of designation, marks, appellations, series of letters, numbers, or words which))~~) that signify (~~((or appear to signify enrollment, attendance, progress, or))~~) satisfactory completion of the requirements or prerequisites for any educational program.

(6) "Entity" includes, but is not limited to, a person, company, firm, society, association, partnership, corporation, or trust.

(7) "Private vocational school" means any location where an entity is offering postsecondary education in any form or manner for the purpose of instructing, training, or preparing persons for any vocation or profession.

(8) "Probation" means the agency has officially notified a private vocational school in writing that the school or a program offered by the school has been identified by the agency as at risk and has deficiencies that must be corrected within a specified time period.

(9) "Program" means a sequence of approved subjects offered by a school that teaches skills and fundamental knowledge required for employment in a particular occupation.

(10) "To grant" includes to award, issue, sell, confer, bestow, or give.

~~((+9+))~~ (11) "To offer" includes, in addition to its usual meanings, to advertise or publicize. "To offer" also means to solicit or encourage any person, directly or indirectly, to perform the act described.

~~((+10+))~~ (12) "To operate" means to establish, keep, or maintain any facility or location where, from, or through which education is offered or educational credentials are offered or granted to residents of this state, and includes contracting for the performance of any such act.

Sec. 2. RCW 28C.10.050 and 2005 c 274 s 247 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) The agency shall adopt (~~(by rule minimum standards for entities~~

~~operating private vocational schools. The minimum standards shall include, but not be limited to, requirements for each))~~ minimum requirements to assess whether a private vocational school is eligible to obtain and maintain a license in this state.

(2) The requirements adopted by the agency shall, at a minimum, require a private vocational school to:

(a) Disclose to the agency information about its ownership and financial position and to demonstrate to the agency that the school is financially viable and responsible and that it has sufficient financial resources to fulfill its commitments to students. Financial disclosures provided to the agency shall not be subject to public disclosure under chapter 42.56 RCW;

(b) Follow a uniform statewide cancellation and refund policy as specified by the agency;

(c) Disclose through use of a school catalog, brochure, or other written material, necessary information to students so that students may make informed enrollment decisions. The agency shall specify what information is required;

(d) Use an enrollment contract or agreement that includes: (i) The school's cancellation and refund policy, (ii) a brief statement that the school is licensed under this chapter and that inquiries may be made to the agency, and (iii) other necessary information as determined by the agency;

(e) Describe accurately and completely in writing to students before their enrollment prerequisites and requirements for (i) completing successfully the programs of study in which they are interested and (ii) qualifying for the fields of employment for which their education is designed;

(f) Comply with the requirements of RCW 28C.10.084;

(g) Assess the basic skills and relevant aptitudes of each potential student to determine that a potential student has the basic skills and relevant aptitudes necessary to complete and benefit from the program in which the student plans to enroll, including but not limited to administering a United States department of education-approved English as a second language exam before enrolling students for whom English is a second language unless the students provide proof of graduation from a United States high school or proof of completion of a GED in English or results of another academic assessment determined appropriate by the agency. Guidelines for such assessments

shall be developed by the agency, in consultation with the schools(~~((The method of assessment shall be reported to the agency. Assessment records shall be maintained in the student's file))~~);

(h) Discuss with each potential student the potential student's obligations in signing any enrollment contract and/or incurring any debt for educational purposes. The discussion shall include the inadvisability of acquiring an excessive educational debt burden that will be difficult to repay given employment opportunities and average starting salaries in the potential student's chosen occupation(~~((~~);

~~((2) Any enrollment contract shall have))~~ (i) Ensure that any enrollment contract between the private vocational school and its students has an attachment in a format provided by the agency. The attachment shall be signed by both the school and the student. The attachment shall stipulate that the school has complied with ~~((subsection (1))~~ (h) of this ((section)) subsection and that the student understands and accepts his or her responsibilities in signing any enrollment contract or debt application. The attachment shall also stipulate that the enrollment contract shall not be binding for at least five days, excluding Sundays and holidays, following signature of the enrollment contract by both parties(~~((~~

~~— (3) The agency shall deny, revoke, or suspend the license of any school that does not meet or maintain the minimum standards))~~; and

(j) Comply with the requirements related to qualifications of administrators and instructors.

(3) The agency may deny a private vocational school's application for licensure if the school fails to meet the requirements in this section.

(4) The agency may determine that a licensed private vocational school or a particular program of a private vocational school is at risk of closure or termination if:

(a) There is a pattern or history of substantiated student complaints filed with the agency pursuant to RCW 28C.10.120; or

(b) The private vocational school fails to meet minimum licensing requirements and has a pattern or history of failing to meet the minimum requirements.

(5) If the agency determines that a private vocational school or a particular program is at risk of closure or termination, the agency shall require the school to take corrective action.

Sec. 3. RCW 28C.10.120 and 1993 c 445 s 3 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) Complaints may be filed under this chapter only by a person claiming loss of tuition or fees as a result of an unfair business practice. The complaint shall set forth the alleged violation and shall contain information required by the agency on forms provided for that purpose. A complaint may also be filed with the agency by an authorized staff member of the agency or by the attorney general.

(2) The agency shall investigate any complaint under this section and shall first attempt to bring about a negotiated settlement. The agency director or the director's designee may conduct an informal hearing with the affected parties in order to determine whether a violation has occurred.

(3) If the agency finds that the private vocational school or its agent engaged in or is engaging in any unfair business practice, the agency shall issue and cause to be served upon the violator an order requiring the violator to cease and desist from the act or practice and may impose the penalties provided under RCW 28C.10.130. If the agency finds that the complainant has suffered loss as a result of the act or practice, the agency may order the violator to pay full or partial restitution of any amounts lost. The loss may include any money paid for tuition, required or recommended course materials, and any reasonable living expenses incurred by the complainant during the time the complainant was enrolled at the school.

(4) The complainant is not bound by the agency's determination of restitution. The complainant may reject that determination and may pursue any other legal remedy.

(5) The violator may, within twenty days of being served any order described under subsection (3) of this section, file an appeal under the administrative procedure act, chapter 34.05 RCW. Timely filing stays the agency's order during the pendency of the appeal. If the agency prevails, the appellant shall pay the costs of the administrative hearing.

(6) If a private vocational school closes without providing adequate notice to its enrolled students, the agency shall provide transition assistance to the school's students including, but not limited to, information regarding: (a) Transfer options available to students; (b) financial aid discharge eligibility and procedures; (c) the labor market, job search strategies, and placement assistance

services; and (d) other support services available to students.

NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** (1) The sum of fifty-three thousand dollars, or as much thereof as may be necessary, is appropriated for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2008, from the general fund to the work force training and education coordinating board for the purposes of this act.

(2) The sum of fifty-three thousand dollars, or as much thereof as may be necessary, is appropriated for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2009, from the general fund to the work force training and education coordinating board for the purposes of this act.